

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND COUNCILS
ALL-MEMBER MEETING**

Date: 7 February 2013

Subject: **Member debate on key measures needed to help the South East economy grow**

Report by: Nick Woolfenden, SEEC Head of Policy Co-ordination



Recommendations:

That members:

- i) Debate priority issues for inclusion in SEEC's short report to influence Government on how best to support the local commitment to economic growth.
- ii) Suggest possible case-studies to underpin the report's recommendations.

1. Introduction

1.1 As agreed at the last all-member meeting, SEEC is producing a short report to influence Government on how best to support the local commitment to economic growth in the South East. SEEC is commissioning expert independent input to support this work. An update will be given to SEEC's Executive Committee on 27 March 2013, aiming for final submission to Government in June 2013. To finalise the scope of this work we welcome member views on priority issues and focus.

2. Suggested scope - for member discussion and input

i. Why South East economic growth matters -

- What are the key factors that highlight the distinctiveness and importance of the South East economy, locally and to the UK?
- How can we illustrate the South East's potential to offer a strong return on investment, addressing the needs of both successful and underperforming areas?

ii. What's already happening -

- What evidence, including short case-studies/good practice examples, would show how freedoms and flexibilities for local government are helping generate economic growth? *We invite member suggestions for possible case studies.*
- How could Government help maximise these efforts?
- What are the barriers to be addressed and opportunities to be seized?

iii. How could more be achieved?

- What steps/policy changes would help Government, local authorities and LEPs further enable economic growth? *Members are invited to comment on possible priorities for exploration, including:*
 - Key types of 'infrastructure' investment to support economic/business growth eg transport, water, energy, broadband, affordable housing, skills.
 - Maximising existing localisation/freedoms/devolution opportunities, and further potential to support economic growth eg wider roll-out of City Deals/City Deal powers; increasing the proportion of local Business Rate retention.
 - Alignment of local and national investment to support growth.
 - Funding distribution - do formula and priorities for funding initiatives such as Regional Growth Fund, New Homes Bonus, Growing Places and Structural Funds adequately reflect South East economic potential & opportunities and/or address needs/scale of issues (eg population size), and what should key criteria be in future?
 - Maximising benefits of other levers/controls - eg procurement, Inward Investment, alignment of public sector investment plans, TIF, planning.
 - Maximising the benefits and addressing the challenges of proximity to London.